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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000947

SIPDIS

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STATE PASS USAID FOR DCHA/OTI

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: NUMBER THREE PROSECUTOR BECOMES CHAVEZ POLITICAL CASUALTY

REF: A. CARACAS 00620

[1](#)B. CARACAS 00882

Classified By: Political Counselor Abelardo A. Arias for
Reason 1.4(d)

Summary:

[1](#)1. (C) Carmen Alguindigue, the former number three prosecutor in the Attorney General's Office, said March 17 she was fired for refusing to support the Chavez political agenda. The increasing number of politically-motivated firings in government will further weaken the nation's institutions, she said. She said Vice President Jose Vincente Rangel "was lying" March 16 when he declared that no human rights complaints had been lodged with law enforcement groups, but she understands that prosecutors have taken little or no action to look into the allegations of human rights abuses. Alguindigue's firing is an example of further weakened Venezuelan institutions, and the GoV consolidating power through non-executive branch institutions. End Summary.

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Prosecutor Pushed Out For Resisting Chavez Line
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[1](#)2. (C) Carmen Alguindigue, former Chief of Procedural Action for the Attorney General's Office (Fiscalia), and a long-time contact of the Embassy's NAS, PAS and Legatt sections, told poloff March 17 that she was fired February 18 as part of a sweep against top Fiscalia managers who resisted policy decisions supporting the Chavez political agenda (reftels). Alguindigue, who held the number three slot in the Attorney General's Office, said she had been warned personally by Attorney General Isaias Rodriguez to "find ways to cooperate" with GoV directives, and Rodriguez routinely called to press her to make decisions on cases effecting GoV interests. While she didn't confront Rodriguez, or defy him outright, she said it became more and more obvious that she was not following his instructions. The decision to dismiss her, she said, was obviously politically motivated. Rodriguez made the decision, but Alguindigue is sure there was pressure from GoV officials like Vice President Rangel.

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Political Firings Weaken Institutions
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[1](#)3. (C) Alguindigue worked as a prosecutor for six years, including during the events of April 2002. She viewed herself as part of a new group of prosecutors who recognized their institutional role in the government, and who worked to keep the institution transparent, independent and responsible under the law. She asserted that the increasing number of politically-motivated firings in government will further weaken the nation's institutions, which are already weak under Chavez.

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Few Human Rights Investigations Due to GoV Pressure
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[1](#)4. (C) Alguindigue also was in charge of overseeing investigations into alleged GoV human rights abuses. She said Vice President Jose Vincente Rangel "was lying" March 16 when he declared that no human rights complaints had been lodged. She noted that Rangel's list of law enforcement agencies did not include the Attorney General's Office, which is the central authority for human rights investigations. Nevertheless, she understands from her contacts in the Attorney General's Office that prosecutors have taken little to no action to look into the many human rights abuses. The GoV, she said, has effectively closed the investigating institutions.

Comment:

15. (C) Alguindigue's departure from the Attorney General's Office is yet another brush stroke in the bleak portrait being painted of weakened Venezuelan institutions and a Gov increasingly consolidating power in the executive. Her absence is likely to reduce the chances of opening investigations into alleged human rights abuses and their effective prosecution.
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